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6. (Amended) An assembly as claimed in claim 2 wherein the loading device comprises means for radially compressing the embolic protection filter.

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9. (Amended) An assembly as claimed in claim 7 in which the cone angle of the funnel is between 15° and 65°.

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11. (Amended) An assembly as claimed in claim 2 wherein the loading device extends into the reception space.

12. (Amended) An assembly as claimed in claim 2 wherein the loading device extends around the outside of the reception space.

13. (Amended) An assembly as claimed in claim 1 comprising a tray, the tray comprising a first retaining means for releasably supporting the pushing device in a disengaged position before delivering the embolic protection filter into the catheter.

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15. (Amended) An assembly as claimed in claim 13 wherein the retaining means comprises a channel for receiving the loading device and/or the catheter and/or the pushing device, and at least one projection on the channel wall projecting inwardly for snap retention of the loading device and/or the catheter and/or the pushing device.

16. (Amended) An assembly as claimed in claim 13 wherein the tray comprises a liquid retaining bath formed by a recess in the tray, the bath having a depth sufficient to accommodate in a totally submerged state the reception space of the catheter and the embolic protection device for submerged loading of the embolic protection filter into the reception space.

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B4
19. (Amended) An assembly as claimed in claim 17 wherein a ramp is provided at an end of the channel communicating with the bath to direct the reception space of the catheter towards a bottom of the bath.

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22. (Amended) An assembly as claimed in claim 16 wherein the first retaining means is provided within the bath.

23. (Amended) An assembly as claimed in claim 1 comprising a flushing means.

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30. (Amended) A method as claimed in claim 26 wherein the pushing device comprises a wire for threading through the embolic protection filter, the wire defining a distal stop for engaging the embolic protection filter.

31. (Amended) A method as claimed in claim 26 wherein the loading device comprises an elongate neck at the outlet end, and the method comprises the step of at least partially positioning the elongate neck in the reception space before delivering the embolic protection filter into the reception space.

32. (Amended) A method as claimed in claim 26 wherein the method comprises the step of flushing the embolic protection filter before delivering the embolic protection filter into the reception space.

33. (Amended) A method as claimed in claim 26 wherein the method comprises the step of flushing the catheter before delivering the embolic protection filter into the reception space.

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34. (Amended) A method as claimed in claim 28 wherein the catheter comprises an outer catheter tube and an inner catheter tube, the inner catheter tube defining the internal proximal stop.

38. (Amended) A method as claimed in claim 36 wherein the pushing device comprises a wire for threading through the embolic protection filter, the wire defining a distal stop for engaging the embolic protection filter.

39. (Amended) A method as claimed in claim 36 wherein the loading device comprises an elongate neck at the outlet end, and the method comprises the step of at least partially aligning the elongate neck with the reception space before delivering the embolic protection filter through the loading device.

40. (Amended) A method as claimed in claim 36 wherein the method comprises the step of flushing the embolic protection filter before delivering the embolic protection filter through the loading device.

41. (Amended) A method as claimed in claim 36 wherein the method comprises the step of flushing the catheter before delivering the embolic protection filter into the reception space.

42. (Amended) A method as claimed in claim 36 wherein the catheter comprises an outer catheter tube and an inner catheter tube, the inner catheter tube defining the internal proximal stop.

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